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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Does anyone know what happened to the sun? And what’s up with this snow, in late April? Yes, I know I’m in New England, but give us a break already! April showers - BAH! Can you tell I’m not happy with the weather?

Well, today we should know what’s going to happen to Microsoft and their penalty hearing. The pre-hearing consensus is that the company will be broken-up somehow. However this ends (we hope to have the results of that hearing in this issue before press time), it doesn’t bode well for Microsoft.

In an article we found and included this week, the discussion of employee e-mail in the workplace is discussed. The premise of the article asks who "owns" employee e-mail? In my opinion, it’s a tough call. Does an employer have the right to monitor employee e-mail? After all, the e-mail exists on an employer’s computer. Legally, you would think that any information on those computers belongs to the employer. Morally, it may be a different matter. At least when it pertains to e-mail. Do employers wiretap their phones? Assuredly, office phones are used for more than just business. Why should e-mail be any different? Unless there’s a strict policy pertaining the personal use of phones and e-mail, I tend to lean toward the position that these things should not be monitored in a fashion to "catch" employees doing something "wrong". On the other hand, abuse of such "privileges" should not be tolerated. It’s a tough call. What do you think?

Until next time...

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Mapping The Atari on the Web

The full text of the classic 8-bit programming guide "Mapping the Atari" is now on the Web.

http://www.atariarchives.org/mapping/

--Kevin Savetz

Joe 1.47 "Moonlight"

bonjour :)

The new version of Joe - HTML editor is available at:

http://www.multimania.com/nef/

New features:

the [censored] horizontal scroller, the MagiC file selector,
GEMScript implementation (with special commands for HTML),
keyboard changes and some others.

Thanks for the FEW people who help me for this release.
Hope I found every bugs.
Enjoy HTML coding and bye

Rajah Lone

New CAB 2.8 Demo

Just go to http://www.application-systems.de/cab/download.html
and give it a try.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. What a week it’s been. The seasons here in the northeast must be suffering from an identity crisis. The temperature here has been below normal for most of the month. So much for global warming, I guess. <grin>

And the unusual weather seems to have affected my attitude as well. I’ve been noticing things that I’ve never noticed before. Like the fact that more and more people are, to put it simply, sheep. They wander around aimlessly, bleating and waiting for someone else to do their thinking for them so that they can feel put-upon and complain about it later.

It’s only the fact that I’ve never seen such a complete social transformation happen so quickly that convinces me that it’s me and not everyone else that has changed. Jeez, I’ve heard of "the winter blues" but never "the springtime blues". Perhaps it’s caused by allergies. Or maybe it’s overwork or lack of sleep. Or perhaps its just that I’m... gasp... getting older. It happens. Or so I’ve been told. It’s funny, but I never thought about getting older. Of course I knew intellectually that I would age, but I never actually pictured myself as getting older. The funny thing is that I’m older now than my father was when I first thought of him as "old".

It’s funny, but I really had no idea of where this column was going until just now. As I’ve been typing, I’ve been wondering what in the heck this was ever going to have to do with computers... and

specifically with Atari computers. The answer? Perceptions!

We are bound not by what we SEE, but by what we PERCEIVE. Some folks SEE our computers of choice and PERCEIVE old, useless, limited relics. What WE perceive are machines that can still do what we want and need them to do.

The reality, of course, is that no matter what computer we have it's simply a collection of metal, plastic and glass. You can't manufacture in a personality. That's where our machines are special. Remember that the next time you boot up... And wonder how your computer perceives YOU. <grin>

Now let's get on with the stuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Bruce Sarte posts this interesting note about browser options:

"...keep in mind that the only reason browsers are where they are on the PC/Mac is because Mosaic source was readily available for them. Without that, Netscape and IE would not be here. There is no Mosaic equivalent on for TOS and no one has written a browser and been kind enough to release the source for others to work on. One man cannot create a fully functional browser a la Netscape or IE. These browser were built by a team of people. I call for the release of the source to CAB or any one of the browsers that is not actively being developed. Let some of the other brilliant programmers have a chance to improve on a solid product."

Martin-Eric Racine tells Bruce:

"That's only partially true.

Most freeware browser sources can easily recompile on MiNT.

Here, I often use Links (a Lynx clone that handles tables) and it compiled right out of the box. Sure, this is a CLI browser, but the sources could be used as a starting point for a GEM browser."

Mike Freeman joins the browser fray and posts:

"We are in desperate need of a complete browser. Adamas and Wensuite are nowhere near adequate, and CAB is becoming more and more obsolete with each new Javascript page put on the 'net. We need some ideas and programmers willing to aggressively apply these ideas. I have a couple propositions for anyone with the programming experience and willingness to tackle such a project:

1. A new "open-source" browser.

   - Different pieces of it worked on by different people, thereby speeding up the process.

   - Free, as in the Linux philosophy. I'm sick of us having to pay large amounts for mediocre browsers that are less functional than the demo version of CAB.

2. Some sort of work around for CAB.

- Create a new CAB.OVL. Instead of downloading the page directly to CAB, it checks to see if the page has any Javascript in it first. If not, it sends the HTML to CAB as usual.

- If there is Javascript, it cuts the Javascript section out, placing it in a separate file, and adding an "EMBED" command to the HTML code, pointing to that file. The new HTML code would then be sent to CAB.

- A separate Javascript viewer program can then be set using OLGA (like Aniplayer is for viewing video QT-VR files). This program will then be in full control of the Javascript, adding what is necessary to the page in the same way Aniplayer adds the interactive video and QT-VR sections to pages.

- This CAB.OVL could also be used to include CSS by adding the appropriate info to subsequent pages downloaded from the same location as the original CSS information, then sending the updated pages to CAB.

- Using this method one could add almost any feature to CAB that’s necessary to keep it up to date without needing to update CAB itself.

- I’m not sure how possible this is (so please advise me if I’m missing an important detail), but from what I’ve seen/read/understood, this should be possible.

Is anyone willing to take on either of these ideas? We desperately need a browser that is complete and up-to-date, otherwise our computers are doomed to obsolescence, even the new Milan II. PLEASE SOMEONE HELP!"

Lonny Pursell tells Mike:

"I hate to rain on your OVL parade but it’s the OVL itself that is part of the problem. It wasn’t well thought out when it was put in place. That’s not to say it’s utter crap, much to the contrary all the OVL authors have done wonders with what they were given. Just that Alex started with an off-line reader and attempted to retro fit it into something else.

A real attempt would allow multiple open connections, rather than one file at a time. In fact on other platforms this multi connection concept is configurable.

It also seems that Alex didn’t want to commit to one OS, hence the OVL idea, but again it’s just not robust enough.

I think a new browser would be better, or one of the current ones which has the socket code built in should be reworked in a serious way, or made open as you suggest.

Has Jpeg2000 hit? If so that would explain files with the jpg extension that refuse to load. Yet another problem."

Edward Baiz adds:

"Alexander Clauss once emailed me and said Cab would be Javascript compatible when someone wrote a Javascript interpreter. I have heard that is being done, but I have seen nothing. The author of Newsie says he will have a Javascript Gem program out soon that will have the VA-Start. This may help in that Cab may be able to use it when trying to get on some Java sites. I am not really sure. I am not sure about Adamas. The new version 1.7 is suppose to have the Javascript module. I do not know if it works good or not. I have heard that 1.6 does not function too well. There is a new browser called Hotwire that will be coming out that, according to the author, is better and faster than Cab. At first it will not have Javascript-compatibility, but will in later versions. About the only sure way of getting on Javascript sites on an Atari is to run Linux and load in one of the Javascript-compatible browsers that exist. You are correct, we need one now. Too Bag Mr. Clauss abandoned us in favor of iCab."

Thomas Binder tells Edward:

"As it was pointed out several times before: JavaScript and Java are _completely_ different things, so a JavaScript GEM program won't help _nothing_ for web pages using Java.

Yes, it's really a shame that he decided to earn some money - he could've made his living from just the thanks of the Atari community ..."

Ken Springer asks for info on toner for his laser printer:

"Anyone know of a suitable toner available in reasonable sized bulk form? I don't need a complete toner cart at the moment, I have a good spare. I just want to refill the one I use daily. It has a scratch, but that doesn't impair it's use for my run of the mill stuff.

Derryck Croker tells Ken:

"I saw bags of toner on sale at the computer fair in Stafford recently, so they are available in the UK at least. Warning - it's nasty stuff."

Vincent Remi asks about the availability of "STuff" for the ST:

"I'll have an Atari ST (I don't know exactly which model it'll be).

So I searched some sites for Atari. I found a lot of sites with .ST and .MSA game files but I didn't see any utils or recent demo files. Nothing, nada, rien...

Where can I find these?

Is there a site where I can have daily news?
Where is the scene ?? Died ??? I don't hope that..."

John Garone tells Vincent:

"Try also UMICH ((probably hasn't been updated in quite a while (if it's still there)): http:www.umich.edu/~archive/atari

And the Atari Webring at:
http://www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?ring=atari;list "

Ken MacDonald adds:

"how about the Place to be?
http://place2be.de/

or http://www.atari.org/

for magic
http://bengy.atari-computer.de/

for mint
http://www.freemint.de/en/index.html "

Lyndon Amsdon asks for info on a couple of different things:

"Anyone know where to get Gembench from?

Also are there any MPEG players that run on the STe which can
use an FPU if fitted to decode the MPEG. I recently visited M Players
web site but he seems to have given up on atari."

Guillaume Deflache tells Lyndon:

"For GemBench go to ftp://ftp.lip6.fr/pub/atari/Utilities/gbnch403.lzh

M_Player, having an FPU or not (get it from
ftp://chapelie.rma.ac.be/atari/audio-video/, should be the last version)

Aniplayer: http://aniplay.atari.org/ "

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time,
same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Star Wars Demolition! Rugrats!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Expendable! 'Maken X'!
                                    'Monster Rancher' And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

LucasArts' Star Wars Demolition for PlayStation:
No-Holds-Barred Vehicular Combat in That Galaxy

Far, Far Away

Smash em! Crash em! and Blast em! into a galaxy far, far away in Star Wars Demolition, a death-defying vehicular combat game for PlayStation from LucasArts Entertainment Company LLC, in partnership with Activision, Inc., and Luxoflux Entertainment, creators of the Vigilante 8 series.

Star Wars Demolition challenges players to compete against the worst scum and villainy in the universe to take on a never-ending riot of characters and vehicles from classic Star Wars and Episode I. Star Wars Demolition is expected for release in fall 2000.

Luxoflux will develop Star Wars Demolition and LucasArts will publish and distribute the title in North America. Activision will co-publish the game with LucasArts and distribute it in all European territories.

Star Wars Demolition, set between The Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi, dares players to compete in a series of brutal vehicular destruction contests organized by crime boss Jabba the Hutt. Contestants vehicles are equipped with basic blasters, plus a unique and powerful weapon. To keep things interesting, prior to each competition Jabba scatters various weapons, combat droids, and power-ups throughout each battle arena. Challengers are then pitted against each other in an all-or-nothing fight for victory.

‘‘With Star Wars Demolition, LucasArts and Activision take Star Wars into a new and dynamic game genre," says Simon Jeffery, president of LucasArts. ‘‘This game is going to be an absolute blast for players, who’ll battle with Star Wars vehicles and characters in ways they’ve never done before."

‘‘We are excited to collaborate on the production of a new game based on Star Wars," states Mitch Lasky, executive vice president of Activision Studios. ‘‘This will be the first game ever to unite elements from all four Star Wars films into one single entertainment property."

Star Wars Demolition’s dynamic single and multiplayer modes thrust competitors into the heat of battle where its destroy or be destroyed. Players will face an onslaught of enemies, including a cannon-equipped rancor, a heavily armed battle tank, and a swift and deadly STAP, to name just a few.

Among the characters and vehicles from which players may choose is the notorious Boba Fett, one of the competition’s wiliest contestants. He is equipped with a powerful disintegrator, capable of draining the shields of rival vehicles. Another well-armed participant is Aurra Sing, introduced to fans in the motion picture Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace. Her swift and agile swoop bike is outfitted with a long-range projectile cannon, capable of knocking out enemies more than 1,000 meters away. A newly created character, Wade Vox, competes in Luke Skywalker’s former, and now heavily armed, landspeeder. Vox is a formidable competitor who is just discovering his Force powers.

The games knockdown, drag-out tournaments are held in several combat arenas throughout the Star Wars galaxy. Each arena abounds in hazards, including the battle-scarred snowfields of the Rebel base on Hoth, patrolled by powerfully armed and deadly accurate AT-ATs; the Great Pit of Carkoon, where competitors not only fight each other but must avoid being snatched and eaten by the dreaded Sarlacc beast; and the dangerous surface of the second Death Star, zealously guarded by scores of laser-equipped Imperial

troops.

Infogrames North America, Inc. Brings Head-to-Head Combat Thrills to the Playstation With Expendable

Don’t stop running, don’t stop shooting, don’t start thinking...because you are Expendable. Infogrames North America, Inc.’s latest PlayStation hit title, which begins shipping to most major retail stores this week, puts players in the middle of intense heart-pounding, enemy-eliminating action.

Expendable brings to life a cloned space marine that is dropped into unfamiliar war-torn territory. On a timed mission to fight and eradicate hundreds of unknown life forms, you must terminate enemies that have destroyed the population of your world. In the midst of this non-stop battle to the death, you must never forget that you are Expendable. ‘‘Expendable is the perfect game for blast-’em-up game enthusiasts," said David Riley, director of product marketing for Infogrames North America Inc.’s Action/Strategy Label. ‘‘It brings 80’s reminiscent action-shooter excitement to an audience that’s thirsty for explosions, intensity, and two-player head-to-head mayhem."

The game features a single-player mode, a two-player cooperative mode, and a two-player head-to-head battle mode in which all bets are off, and only the best Expendable unit survives. As the story progresses, gamers can fire over 15 forbidding weapons, such as the phantasm, which skips over surfaces toward the best target it can find in the direction you are aiming, or the portable particle accelerator, a powerful beam weapon that cuts through enemy armor. Throughout the already tense missions, players will need to free up any hostages they come across, providing them points and health energy in return. In addition to the thrilling gameplay, Expendable features stunning graphics and dramatic lighting effects, both enhancing the already suspenseful scenes. Other key features include cutting edge 3D graphics, over 20 levels of action combat, an exhilarating storyline, and a high repeat playability factor with the head-to-head combat feature. Developed by Rage Software, Expendable is available at an estimated retail price of $29.99 and can be found at most major retail outlets.

Gamers Put the Pedal to the Metal in F1 World Grand Prix for Sega Dreamcast

Hold on to your controllers, it’s going to be a close race! Sega of America announced the release of the action-packed racing game ‘‘F1 World Grand Prix" for the 128-bit, Internet-ready Sega Dreamcast.

Officially licensed to Video Systems by Formula One Administration Limited, ‘‘F1 World Grand Prix" allows gamers to compete as themselves or assume the identity of renowned racers such as Michael Schumacher, Eddie Irvine or Mika Hakkinen. This game features all 22 Formula One cars and drivers, as well as tracks and weather conditions recreated with painstaking detail based on FIA 1998 data (FIA is Federation Internationale de l’Automobile, the world-wide motor sport governing branch). With amazing 3D graphics, realistic gameplay, and extensive creative control over game options, players are immersed in the most realistic Formula One competition racing game ever, only made possible by the advanced technology of Sega Dreamcast.

Some aspects that make ‘‘F1 World Grand Prix" such a realistic endeavor are the amazing 3D graphics and animated sequences. Superb environmental effects can replicate the exact weather conditions of specific days from the 1998 season. Crowds, pit crews, backdrops and stands are all painstakingly rendered in sharp detail. Gamers can see the crowd move and react to individual drivers’ performances by waving flags and cheering in the stands. Sponsors’ names can also be clearly seen around the track walls right down to the company car logos printed on the steering wheel. The opening intro, pit stops and winning and losing sequences put gamers in the front row seat of the race. In fact, every aspect of attending a race is covered in the game except for the smell of burning rubber.

Another element that sets ‘‘F1 World Grand Prix" apart from other racing games is the extensive amounts of creative control gamers have over the cars and racing conditions. Players can customize every aspect of their vehicle including gear ratio, suspension, front and rear wing angles, brake balance, brake sensitivity, tire type and steering to match the needs of the driver’s style and the different environments. Players can also alter the weather, number of laps, starting positions, flag usage and are given the option of turning off car damage to make their vehicle indestructible. Advanced telemetry readouts, 3D cockpits detailed with realistic driver animations and two virtual views, and an artificial intelligence that recreates drivers’ true-to-life-driving styles make this the definitive Formula One racing game.

‘‘Only on Sega Dreamcast is it possible to recreate the 1998 Grand Prix season in such amazing graphical detail," said Charles Bellfield, director of marketing communications, Sega of America. ‘‘Sega is dedicated to bringing consumers the most realistic and exciting gameplay experiences possible and we think that racing and non-racing fans alike will enjoy the adrenaline rush and non-stop action that ‘F1 World Grand Prix’ has to offer Dreamcast gamers."

‘‘F1 World Grand Prix" not only offers detailed graphics, it provides players with realistic gameplay via four different competitive modes, including Championship, Single Race, Time Attack and Match Race. In Championship mode, gamers must prove their worth by conquering all 16 races based on the Formula One Grand Prix ’98 season, with events being replayed such as drivers’ pit stops, retiring records and engine blow outs. Single Race mode permits players to choose from individual races in the season and is ideal for practicing and improving their driving techniques for the final race of the ’98 Formula One Grand Prix. Time Attack mode allows players to polish up their skills by racing against the ‘‘Ghost Car," which is a replica of the vehicle that holds the gamers’ current or loaded best lap, and Match Race allows gamers the opportunity to leave their friends in the dust with a friendly one-on-one competition.

The replay value of ‘‘F1 World Grand Prix" is amazing with precisely replicated locations of actual circuit cameras to allow players to watch their own races as if viewing live coverage on TV. Replays can be watched in a plethora of views including TV Camera, On Board Camera, Front Suspension and Cockpit. Players can now boast about their winning run while watching the replay with their friends. While driving, gamers also have the option of five different views to choose from and can move from view to view with ease.

‘‘F1 World Grand Prix" is currently available at retailers nationwide and at sega.com for $39.95.

Maken X for Sega Dreamcast Introduces a New Approach to First Person Fighting Games

Sega of America, Dreamcast Inc. announced the release of ‘‘Maken X" for the 128-bit, Internet-ready Sega Dreamcast videogame console. Continuing Sega’s tradition of innovative game offerings, ‘‘Maken X" - developed for Sega Dreamcast by Atlus - represents a new breed of first-person fighting games. Throughout this action-bloated battlefest, players assume the role of a supernatural blade and use it to combat foes and possess different individuals. Depending on who is under the spell of Maken, there is an array of branching storylines. With incredibly fast pacing, a unique targeting system, immersing 3D sound, multiple endings and a non-stop supply of opposition, there’s little room for relaxation.

In ‘‘Maken X," players take the form of Maken, a mystical sword-like instrument that is able to possess characters in a process known as ‘‘brainjacking." In addition to allowing a player to acquire a new body, brainjacking enables characters to learn new actions and information vital to the plot. As a result, how the game ends depends on which character is under the influence of Maken. Since there are 13 different characters that can be brainjacked, this title has plenty of replay value.

The ‘‘Maken X" storyline unfolds in three different parts: Event Scenes, Action Scenes and World Map. Event Scenes are cinematic episodes that require the gamer to respond to certain questions, while ‘‘Action Scenes" represent the hands-on dueling element. Depending on the player’s response to key questions during Event Scenes and their decisions during Action Scenes, the story will diverge into several side-stories with 7 different possible endings. Using the World Map, the player can move between different stages and spot the locations of key characters, including those who can be brainjacked.

‘‘With ‘Maken X,’ Sega has redefined the nature of first-person action adventure games for Sega Dreamcast," said Charles Bellfield, director of marketing communications, Sega of America. ‘‘Given its unique concept and visceral gameplay, Sega has raised the bar in first person gameplay."

The first-person fighting system in ‘‘Maken X" is cutting edge in all senses. Using a unique lock-on system, players can target an opponent’s weakest area to deliver the most damage. Among the combat options are the basic attack, the multiple attack, a special attack and the ability to deflect opponent’s projectiles. Players can also utilize a variety of hand-held weapons to hack and slash their way through some of the most gruesome creatures ever seen.

Thanks to the power of Sega Dreamcast, ‘‘Maken X" has incredibly gorgeous graphics, sound, and a fast pace that’s tough to beat. Throughout the game, there are more than 20 massive levels, all designed with a life-like flair. ‘‘Maken X" has positional 3D surround sound for added realism, so players will feel like they’re in the game. The tempo is also enhanced, with graphics that fly by at an incredibly ultra-smooth 60 frames per second.

‘‘Maken X" is available for $49.95 at retailers nationwide and at www.sega.com. ‘‘Maken X" is rated M for Mature.

Monster Rancher Comes to Game Boy Color

The wildly popular trading card craze goes digital with the introduction of Tecmo’s Monster Rancher BattleCard for Nintendo’s GameBoy and Game Boy Color.

Electronic trading cards based upon Tecmo’s Monster Rancher video games unlock the keys to exciting gameplay, becoming the currency that fuels epic monster battles.

‘‘The success of the Monster Rancher games, BKN’s Monster Rancher animated television series in the United States and the Monster Rancher trading card craze in Japan has created a huge appetite for a game like this," said John Inada, Tecmo marketing manager.

‘‘Now, Monster Rancher fans can have a blast playing battle cards anytime, anywhere. And the fun can be doubled with the use of GameBoy’s Link Cable for trading game cards among friends and opponents."

Monster Rancher BattleCard players explore the world together with the monsters of the TV animated series to collect ‘‘discs" that can be taken to the monster shrine to unleash the monster contained on the disc. In the shrine, ‘‘discs" are transformed into Monster Cards and Skill Cards (attack, defense, power, intelligence, evasion, and more). The goal is to collect all 100 electronic cards from various points on the island.

The more cards a player collects the stronger he becomes and the more success he can achieve in combat. As the game progresses, players take part in ‘‘License Matches" at the arena. Winning a license match allows players to move to higher levels and increase the number of battles they are qualified to enter. The ultimate accomplishment is to reach the level of Master Class, the highest level of breeder.

Monster Rancher BattleCard is available at video game retailers nationwide and carries a suggested retail price of $29.99. The game is rated ‘‘E" (Everyone).

The Monster Rancher and Monster Rancher 2 video games spawned the ‘‘Monster Rancher" animated TV series which premiered last fall in the United States on the BKN Kids Network, Fox Kids Network, Fox Family Channel and Sci-Fi Channel, becoming an enormous ratings success.

The TV production is completely digital and features episodes in which a young boy takes viewers on thrilling adventures into a world of more than 400 monsters. The series is produced by CBC, Dentsu and TMS-Kyokuichi Corporation.

THQ and Nickelodeon Announce ‘Rugrats in Paris’ for Playstation, Nintendo 64 and Game Boy Color

THQ Inc. and Nickelodeon announced the seventh addition to their top-selling Rugrats videogame lineup, ‘‘Rugrats in Paris."

‘‘Rugrats in Paris" for the PlayStation game console, Nintendo 64, and Game Boy Color is based on the upcoming Rugrats feature film of the same title, which launches in November 2000. THQ and Nickelodeon’s various

Rugrats adventures for PlayStation, Nintendo 64, and Game Boy Color boast sales over 2,500,000 in the U.S. alone since November 1998.

With more than 20 million viewers each week, Rugrats is the highest-rated show on Nickelodeon, the No. 1 cable network.

‘‘We are very excited about our successful working relationship with Nickelodeon, and will continue to expand the Rugrats franchise by delivering quality console games to kids and gamers alike," stated THQ’s Germaine Gioia, vice president of licensing. ‘‘Our first Rugrats release, ’The Rugrats Movie,’ won tremendous recognition as a simultaneous videogame and major motion picture event. We look forward to another truly entertaining interactive Rugrats adventure boasting major cross-promotional support with ’Rugrats in Paris."’

‘‘Together with THQ, Nickelodeon continues to deliver the most innovative software to kids," said Steve Youngwood, vice president, Interactive Products and Nickelodeon Consumer Products. ‘‘Kids are clamoring for new ways to interact with their favorite Rugrats characters, and we’ve had tremendous success with our Rugrats video game product since their launch. We’re so pleased to continue our success with THQ with new games based on ’Rugrats in Paris - The Movie."’

In ‘‘Rugrats in Paris," Tommy, Chuckie, Angelica, Phil, Dil and friends travel to Euro ReptarLand in Paris in a completely 3-D world designed from actual movie stills. Players can assume the role of their favorite Rugrats character including Kimmy, the newest Rugrat that will be introduced in the movie.

The 16 levels of varied and amusing gameplay are based on favorite Rugrats characters and movie environments, including the Ooey-Gooey World, the Chuckie Chan obstacle course, and the Reptar Bumper cars. As players search for mechanical parts to help Stu fix his Robotic Reptar, they will enjoy voice over from actual Rugrats characters as well as sound from the TV show and movie. With artwork and game levels based on the Rugrats in Paris movie, kids can re-live their movie memories again and again on the PlayStation game console, Nintendo 64, and Game Boy Color.

For more information on Rugrats in Paris, other recently released Rugrat titles and the rest of THQ’s 2000 lineup, visit www.thq.com.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Microsoft Is Feeling the Heat

Microsoft Corp. on Monday entered stormy waters that are forcing the software giant to navigate around a legal whirlpool that could split the company asunder while steering clear of lurking hazards like increased competition and slowing growth.

Microsoft stock was pummeled down by as much as 17 percent to $65 a share -- its lowest level since December, 1998 -- amid a dimming financial outlook and word that the U.S. Justice Department was leaning toward splitting up the company as a penalty for breaking antitrust law.

That wedges the Redmond, Wash.-based company between a rock and a hard place, torn between wanting to project strength to win back investor confidence while trying to convince a skeptical judge that it should be let off lightly, analysts said.

Last Thursday, Microsoft posted third-quarter profits that edged past Wall Street forecasts, but revenues were lower than expected, and the company issued an ultra-cautious outlook for the coming months, citing factors like slower demand for PCs.

Most analysts felt Microsoft's concerns were justified, downgrading its shares or lowering profit estimates, but some said they couldn't help but suspect more Machiavellian motives.

''Microsoft and its partners are looking for a number of ways to represent a highly competitive market where Microsoft doesn't hold a competitive position and where a breakup isn't needed," said Daniel Kusnetzky, vice president of systems software research for International Data Corp., a technology research group.

Some Wall Street analysts voiced doubts Microsoft would intentionally sabotage its stock just to appear vulnerable and escape a harsh punishment, but said the timing of the cautionary outlook raised eyebrows.

''This is a chess game and, you know, in a chess game you do all kind of bluffs and fakes," said Scott McAdams, president of Seattle-based brokerage McAdams Wright Ragen. ''I can't imagine they would sacrifice their stock price, but certainly the thought crosses the mind."

Brian Goodstadt, an analyst with the S&P Equity Group, added, ''It's certainly a possibility that there's some posturing going on. But I'd be surprised that Microsoft would force its stock to take such a hit."

Still, the words of warning voiced by the company's new chief financial officer, John Connors, are sure to be used as ammunition by Microsoft in its court arguments that it faces threats from all sides.

''They are not facing any additional competition than they have before. What is happening is the whole PC market is facing competition," Kusnetzky said.

''As people move to intelligent network-oriented devices, like mobile phones or Internet televisions, Microsoft and Windows become less important," Kusnetzky said.

But analysts also cautioned that it was premature to declare Microsoft's fate sealed, saying the judge would not necessarily rule for a break-up, and even if he did, the company would drag the case out in appeals courts for years.

''Whether the judge is inclined to go that way or not is a different matter. It's not the final chapter," McAdams said of a break-up. ''It's a little premature to be really worried about that yet."

The company has insisted it broke no laws, despite the judge ruling it did, and Bob Herbold, the chief operating officer, repeated that stance on Monday, saying a break-up would be "entirely inappropriate".

Some analysts said such statements are asking for trouble because they increase the perception that Microsoft is a surly lawbreaker and boost the government's resolve to seek the harshest remedy possible.

''They need to get serious about image. They also need to be very pragmatic about litigation," said Rob Enderle, an analyst with technology research firm Giga Information Group.

''The choice is likely whether they'll drive the break-up themselves or have one forced on them. If they continue not to participate, then the odds are on them being broken up in the worst way possible," Enderle said.

''This is serious stuff, where we are talking about the potential near-term mortality of Microsoft," Enderle said.

For now, most analysts said they expected Microsoft to steam ahead with projects like pitching Windows 2000, its new industrial-strength operating system for businesses, and Windows Me, its upcoming consumer platform that includes a host of new multimedia and Internet features.

''From their standpoint it is business as usual. They're pushing real hard on servers, they're pushing real hard on broadband, they're pushing real hard on wireless, and you're just going to see more of that," McAdams said.

''They're hunkered down. They're going to ride this storm out," McAdams said.

U.S. Asks Court to Break Microsoft in Two

The U.S. government on Friday urged a federal judge to break software powerhouse Microsoft Corp. into two separate companies to curb its monopoly power in key software.

The Justice Department and 17 of the 19 states that brought one of the biggest antitrust cases in U.S. history formally unveiled the proposed breakup of the company in a 17-page proposed order to a federal judge.

The dramatic request opened the penalty phase of the two-year-old case that pits one of the world's most successful high technology companies against the full weight of the U.S. government.

''Under our proposal, neither ongoing government regulation nor the self-interest of an entrenched monopolist will decide what is best for consumers," Assistant Attorney General Joel Klein said in a statement. ''Instead, consumers will be able to choose for themselves the products they want in a free and competitive marketplace."

It was the stiffest antitrust penalty sought against a major American corporation since a 1982 agreement to split telephone giant AT&T into regional ''baby bells." The Microsoft case has also been compared with the breakup of oil baron John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil empire in 1911.

The government proposal would separate Microsoft’s dominant Windows operating system business from software applications like word processing, spreadsheets and control of the Web browser.

‘‘These proposals would have a chilling effect on innovation in the high technology industry. Microsoft could never have developed Windows under these rules," Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates said in a videotaped statement.

The announcement of the proposal does not mean that Microsoft will be broken into pieces immediately. The company has promised to appeal vigorously all the way to the Supreme Court. That could push the controversial case into 2001 when a new president will take office and could change U.S. antitrust policy.

Cleaving Microsoft in two would mean profound changes for the company whose rapid growth since its 1975 founding has made Chairman Bill Gates one of the world’s richest men and helped put the United States at the forefront of the digital age.

Some stock analysts say two Microsoft companies might be valued more highly than one although most see the stock suffering from uncertainty until a final outcome of the case.

Microsoft shares firmed slightly to 70 11/16 in after-hours trading following the announcement of the proposal, from its close of 69 3/4 in the regular trading session.

The government hopes splitting Microsoft would offer consumers greater choice by preventing the dominant Windows operating system, that runs on over 80 percent of personal computers, from being used to force companies and consumers to use other Microsoft software.

The split could also encourage development of alternative operating software and new applications for such systems.

Computer analysts say Microsoft has provided two decades of leadership and standard setting for the industry. But they are divided on whether that leadership has already begun to slip as the personal computer age gives way to a world where microchips are embedded in everything from telephones to cars.

The proposal to break up the company stems from an antitrust complaint filed by the U.S. government in May, 1998 that charged Microsoft illegally used its monopoly power to crush Netscape, a rival Web browser maker that has since been sold to American Online Inc.

A long trial began in October, 1998, and included sometimes confrontational videotaped testimony from Gates, who quibbled with prosecutors over the meaning of seemingly simple words.

Federal District Court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson ruled in November last year that Microsoft held monopoly power in key systems and used it to harm consumers and competitors.

A Chicago judge was appointed to explore a settlement but announced on April 1 that the effort had failed.

Then on April 3, Jackson ruled that the Microsoft actions had violated the law. Friday’s proposal set out the penalty the government would like the

judge to levy on Microsoft for breaking the law.

There is no sign that the legal wrangling over the case will end soon. Jackson has set a May 24 date for oral arguments on the proposed penalty and he hopes to expedite any appeal, possibly straight to the Supreme Court.

But the company has said it will need much more time and would prefer the normal progression of the case through an appeals court.

A slower timetable could keep the matter from reaching the highest court until after the January swearing in of a new president -- either Republican George W. Bush or Democrat Al Gore. There is speculation in Washington that Bush would be more skeptical of the government case.

Most opinion polls suggest that a majority of the public support Microsoft’s position rather than that of the government.

Microsoft Calls Proposed Breakup Extreme

Microsoft Corp. on Friday branded as extreme a U.S. government proposal to split the software giant into two companies, saying it would hurt consumers, hinder innovation, and would likely face defeat in the court system.

The U.S. Justice Department and 17 of the 19 states in the case filed their long-awaited proposal with a federal judge on Friday, saying a breakup of the Redmond, Wash.-based company was the best way to end its monopoly in the basic software that runs personal computers.

Within minutes, Microsoft shot back that a breakup would be a bad idea for everyone.

‘‘Rather than be reasonable and try to resolve the case, the government is asking for extreme remedies that would hurt consumers and reduce innovations," said Microsoft spokesman Rick Miller.

‘‘These demands are not supported by the facts and are not likely to be sustained by the judicial system," Miller said, moments after the 17-page proposal was publicly unveiled.

Microsoft said senior executives would hold a teleconference at 3 p.m. PDT (6 p.m. EDT) to respond to the proposal in more detail.

Microsoft shares, which have been battered in recent weeks by concerns over the case and its business outlook, fell 1/16 to 69 3/4 on Friday just before the proposal was announced. Shares rose in after-hours trading to as high as 71.

The judge in the case ruled on April 3 that Microsoft, which built its fortune on its Windows operating system that powers about 80 percent of personal computers, abused that dominance to stifle competition and strong-arm partners.

The company has vigorously denied it did anything illegal and has vowed to appeal the case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court if necessary.

In their filing, the Justice Department and the states said Microsoft

should be split into two companies, one in charge of Windows and one to handle everything else, such as the Office suite of business software.

Sales of Windows account for just over 40 percent of the company's revenues, which topped $5.6 billion in its third quarter ended March 31. Revenues from Office account for another 40-plus percent, with the rest coming from other software, Internet properties and hardware.

Analysts are divided on whether a breakup would be good for shareholders, with some saying the new companies could grow quickly by exploiting untapped markets, while others warn a split could destroy the valuable links between the platform and the applications that run on it.

In addition to a breakup, the government is also seeking to bar the two companies from merging or forming joint ventures or retaliating against companies who gave evidence in the case.

The proposal would impose temporary uniform licensing terms for Windows and allow PC makers to alter the appearance of the platform.

In a video news release that aired on the CNBC financial network, Microsoft co-founder and Chairman Bill Gates stood his ground in defending the company, saying the proposals would hamstring the company's ability to create new products.

''The consumers should understand that these remedies would not allow us to continue to develop new software products as we have in the past," Gates said. ''These regulations do not help the software industry in any way."

Microsoft has until May 10 to file its response to the proposals, in preparation for a hearing on May 24.

Microsoft Break-Up Plan Sparks Shareholder Debate

Are two Microsoft's better than one?

That's the debate raging among analysts, observers and, most of all, Microsoft Corp. shareholders as they await details of a U.S. Justice Department plan to split the software giant up as penance for its antitrust sins.

Justice and the 19 states that are suing Microsoft have until Friday to file a proposed penalty and no one yet knows exactly what their blueprint for break-up will look like.

But sources in Washington have said the Justice Department will propose cleaving Microsoft in two, with one company taking control of the Windows operating system and the other taking charge of applications such as the Office suite of business software.

Microsoft, which has vowed to appeal the case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court if needed, insists a break-up would be extreme and unjustified, torpedoing its business and taking investors down as well.

Indeed, just the speculation the government will seek such a harsh remedy has helped drive Microsoft stock down 43 percent from a 52-week high of

nearly $120 a share. The stock rose 1 13/16 to 69 13/16 on Thursday.

The numbers indicate that even smaller Microsofts will be plenty big.

In its third quarter, Microsoft raked in more than $5.6 billion in revenues. Windows sales accounted for about 41 percent of that, with applications, including Office, making up 46 percent.

‘‘I think the stocks would do well, because the current revenue-generating products are pretty strong," said Scott McAdams, president of Seattle-based brokerage McAdams Wright Ragen.

‘‘Office is enormous and Windows in enormous and their respective market shares are enormous. The Street would pay you some pretty good multiples for that kind of market share," McAdams said.

Some analysts point to the carving up of telecommunications giant AT&T Corp. in 1984 into a handful of ‘‘Baby Bells" as evidence that Microsoft shareholders stand to reap windfall gains if they end up holding two or more ‘‘Baby Bills".

‘‘If I was a shareholder I’d be rooting for a breakup," said Gary Beach, group publisher of CIO Magazine.‘‘Financially, it could be not a bad scenario for holders of Microsoft shares," Beach said, adding he did not think a break-up was warranted and that restrictions on Microsoft’s behavior might be a better remedy.

Splintering off applications from the operating system would allow both units to tap new markets neither dared to explore before, such as writing software for the upstart Linux platform.‘‘Long-term, I think it would open them up to growth they currently cannot experience," said Rob Enderle, an analyst with Giga Information Group, a technology research firm.‘‘The platform unit and the applications unit are sort of capped by each other. The applications can’t move to other platforms for fear of cannibalizing Windows and neither one of them view the emerging markets as being of potential.

"But short-term investors beware: if the judge does rule for a break-up, the stock would almost surely be battered for months as Microsoft and regulators hammered out details on who gets what, analysts said.‘‘It probably would be negative for value while the companies figure out what they’re supposed to do," Enderle said, adding it could take as long as a year-and-a-half for investor confidence to return.

Opponents of a break-up say it could wipe out vital links between the platform and application businesses, hurting the new companies and their share prices.Richard McKenzie, a business professor at the University of California in Irvine, says comparisons to AT&T hold no water because the Microsoft case is fundamentally different.

"AT&T was a regulated monopoly before the breakup, meaning there were legal barriers to entry," said McKenzie, who has recently published his book, ‘‘Trust on Trial: How the Microsoft Case is Reframing the Rules of Competition."

‘‘It’s illogical to argue that Microsoft is now a monopoly, presumably charging monopoly prices, and that a break-up will lead to more competitive markets and a higher market value for all Baby Bills.

"Analysts also debate whether consumers will benefit.Some, like McKenzie,

say prices will rise because Microsoft has sold Windows cheaply in part to boost sales of Office. Others counter that challenges from new technologies will force prices down anyway.

In the end, the smashing of Microsoft may be tantamount to a roll of the dice.‘‘It’s a bit ludicrous of anybody to predict the effect of such a break-up on the industry and say with any certainty whether it would be positive or negative," said Dwight Davis, an analyst with research firm Summit Strategies.

‘‘It’s at best a risky move on the part of the Department of Justice to propose a structural remedy when they know no better than I would the ramifications of that."

‘‘It’s really a snake pit of figuring out the possibilities," he added.

AOL 5.0 for Mac Due

America Online is set to release AOL 5.0 for the Macintosh, a new version of its Mac client software that features a redesigned Welcome Screen, a built-in calendar, a new search engine and several e-mail enhancements. AOL said the client will be available for download late Tuesday.

The new Welcome Screen is designed to provide a single location from which to access AOL features. For example, you can click on a Channel Guide to access content areas, or check daily events under AOL Today. New Welcome Screen features include My Places, a section for storing frequently accessed Web sites; AOL Search, which lets you search AOL and Web content in a single operation; and You’ve Got Pictures, a service developed in partnership with Eastman Kodak that delivers photos directly to your AOL account.

Another new Welcome Screen feature, My Calendar, lets you track personal items as well as public events. If you schedule the latter, you can automatically link to ticket-buying services and other relevant sites. In addition to accessing AOL Search and My Calendar from the Welcome Screen, you can also do so through the navigation toolbar.

A new e-mail function lets you retrieve messages accidentally deleted within the past 24 hours. You can also find downloaded e-mail attachments on disk by clicking on a Locate button, and add up to five custom signatures for each screen name.

You create up to seven screen names (up from five), with the ability to switch names in Auto AOL sessions without redialing. Screen names can now accommodate up to 16 characters compared with 10 in the previous version.

The software includes several Mac-only features. You can view animated GIF files--or play embedded sounds--in e-mails sent by other Mac AOL users; use Apple’s text-to-speech feature to read text aloud; resize or collapse the address field in incoming messages; drag and drop file attachments to e-mail messages; and change the delivery type (to/cc/bcc) with a single click. You can also set up the Personal Filing Cabinet to delete messages after a certain time, and you can sort the cabinet and Address Book by Name/Subject, Address or Date.

AOL 5.0 will ship with a customized version of Internet Explorer 4.0--not

the latest 5.0 browser release. The company said that the development cycles for the two 5.0 products would not accommodate a bundled release. AOL has a contractual agreement to offer Internet Explorer as its default Web browser even though the company owns rival Netscape, which it acquired last year.

AOL's Jeff Kimball told MacWEEK sister site MacCentral that the company is currently working on a Mac version of AOL Plus, an enhanced version of the online service for users with DSL or other forms of high-speed Internet access.

AMD Announces New 'Duron' Processor

AMD is pitching staying power with Duron. The new chip is based on the Athlon processor technology and will target consumers in the market for value PCs.

Advanced Micro Devices Inc. is pitching staying power with a new brand of processor designed for the value PC.

The processor's name, Duron, was derived from the Latin word "durare," which means "to last." Duron was announced Thursday morning by Jerry Sanders, the company's chairman and CEO, at its financial analyst meeting in New York.

Duron, based on AMD's Athlon processor technology, will target consumers in the market for value PCs.

It is expected that Duron will be available this summer in sub-$1,000 PCs. AMD will offer the new chip at higher clock speeds than its K6-2, which has topped out at 550MHz, but is unlikely to charge much more than the 550MHz K6-2, which was introduced at $187.

The consumer benefit, the company says, will be low cost and much higher performance.

"We want (consumers) to know they've got something good and solid and they won't have to spend another $1,000 in six months or a year," said Mark Bode, division marketing manager for Athlon at AMD.

While Duron is a derivative of the company's Athlon processor, it will be aimed at value PCs. AMD will differentiate the chip from its high-end Athlon through clock speed, price, bus speed and cache size.

The chip will offer 128KB of on-die cache and will use AMD's new Socket A packaging. Socket A is a socket for attaching the chip to the motherboard. It looks similar to the Super Socket 7 used by the company's K6-2 chip.

Appearances, however, are where the similarities end. Duron will have a smaller Level 2 cache, lower clock speed and lower cost than the Athlon.

Duron is sampling to PC makers now. The chip is slated to begin shipments in June.

AMD did not disclose other details on the new chip. However, ZDNet has reported that Duron will offer a 200MHz system bus and will be available in a range of speeds from 550MHz to 700MHz with prices ranging from $75 to

$175.

AMD will aim Duron, along with its K6-2 chip, squarely at competitor Intel Corp.’s Celeron chip. Duron will be based on AMD’s 0.18-micron manufacturing process.

The Duron announcement comes at a time when AMD is facing supply tightness on its K6-2 chips.

"Virtually all of the K6-2 processors we’re going to build this quarter are sold," said AMD spokesman Drew Prairie. However, "we’re still taking orders on Athlon."

"The big picture is that I think we’re seeing unseasonably high demand," Bode said.

AMD’s previously announced goals are to ship 1.8 million Athlon processors this quarter, 3.6 million next quarter and 7.2 million in the fourth quarter.

While AMD plans to sell a lot of Athlons, the company is also planning a revision of the chip for midyear.

Athlon’s Achilles’ heel, according to analysts, is its off-die Level 2 cache. The cache on higher-speed Athlon chips runs much slower than the processor, which holds back the performance of the chip. The cache on chips including the 950MHz and 1GHz (1,000MHz) runs at only one-third of the processor clock speed.

AMD’s forthcoming Athlon with integrated cache, known by the code name Thunderbird, is expected to address this issue by moving the cache on-chip to raise the performance of the Athlon. Thunderbirds, as reported by ZDNet, are expected at midyear.

AMD has also made some minor tweaks to its processor road map.

The company had announced plans to create a corporate-oriented processor brand called Athlon Professional. The company has dropped that name and will market the Athlon name to both consumer and corporate buyers.

AMD’s stable of processor brands will now include Athlon, Athlon Ultra, Duron and the K6 line of chips for value PCs and notebooks. Athlon Ultra is a forthcoming brand of processors with large Level 2 caches targeted at high-end, dual-processor applications. It is expected in the second half of this year.

AMD has also revealed a new code name for its forthcoming Athlon-based mobile processor. Nothing about the chip has changed. It will be based on the Mustang processor core and will use the company’s Socket A packaging. However, instead of referring to it as Mustang mobile, AMD is now calling the mobile chip Corvette.

Whose E-mail Is It, Anyway?

When it comes to responding to the misuse of e-mail, Internet services, and other office resources by employees, there are two kinds of companies: the reasonable, and the unreasonable.

The reasonable company recognizes that its employees are social animals - not drones. They need to communicate ideas and emotions daily. They also possess a need to know what is going on in the world, and to obtain relief from the tedium of the tasks at hand.

In the pre-Internet world, companies tolerated the use of office telephones and radios as ways to satisfy employee needs. The standard for when these resources were being abused and cutting into productivity - in what amounts to employee theft of wages - was intentionally left somewhat fuzzy.

It was, in that sense, a recognition also that you'd waste more time monitoring employees for minor abuses than you could possibly save - an enforcement issue, so to speak. The most blatant cases would show up in other ways, such as when particular deadlines were not met for projects. Those could be dealt with accordingly.

The same is still true today, but with the technological power of office automation, some employers might be tempted to think they can overcome enforcement limitations. They are tempted, in other words try, to wring the inefficiency of being human out of their employees.

They can do that, as you know, by using keywords to search e-mail and Internet domains, and who knows what other methods. In a recent case described in a Wall Street Journal story, an employer raided an employee's personal correspondence folder on the company server.

As a purely legal matter, I side with the employers. If they want to engage in a hunt against abuse of office resources, as they define it, then as owners of those resources, they have that right. But those companies that choose to do so are the unreasonable companies. They are hurting themselves with their hubris in thinking that the search for abuse won't lead to loss of employees and different kinds of abuse.

The story mentioned above also cites a couple of cases in which employers enforced resource policies, some of which can be construed as unreasonable to the reader - and illegal under current labor law.

Like the case of Lawrence Leinweber, who was fired for using office e-mail to complain about his company's new mandatory vacation policy, attempting to debunk the claims of his employer that the policy would benefit all.

Or the case of Brian Waldron, suspended by Pratt & Whitney for distributing union information via office computers.

In both cases, the company took a heavy-handed approach toward those who disagreed with their policies and attempted to organize others exploiting the efficiencies of office technology.

Viewed in the short-term, the companies' behavior was rational. They were pursuing immediate interests. And using new search technology they can do that easier than before.

Keying in words like "union" or "strike" - or even searching for references to previous management memos - might make efficient work of stifling dissent.

But even the most sophisticated artificial intelligence is unlikely to calculate the long-term results of tolerating employee dissent. The type

of communication some seek to stop can be a way of blowing off steam, without further action. But it is also in a company’s interest to allow employee sentiment on an issue to congeal at some point. How else would management promulgate general policy?

What’s more, search technology would only empower managers to overstep their boundaries at times. The unintended consequence of such a policy would allow managers to become prurient about employee behavior the way an employee might be about a particular Web site. In this case, the employer has merely shifted the problem, not solved it. Who will police the police?

In fact, the prudent response, one that is exercised in the majority of Net-based businesses, is to not succumb to the temptation to turn employees into a problem to be solved. If "inefficiency" - what some would call leisure - is seen as a problem, then so also is creativity, which flows from discontent.

Courtesy of Inter@ctive Week

Hopes for Paperless Office Buried in Paper

Remember the paperless office?

No one talks about it much anymore, maybe because they are too busy printing out e-mails, articles from online newspapers, and all the other written material they now have access to thanks to the wonders of technology.

But as Earth Day arrived on Saturday, environmentalists say a society that has so readily embraced technology should remember one of the promised benefits that the Internet has failed to deliver.

At one time, computers were expected largely to eliminate the need for paper copies of documents because they could be stored electronically. But for all the volumes of text that are now created, stored and transmitted electronically, an awful lot of it is still ending up on paper.

It is difficult to measure how much paper consumption has resulted from the proliferation of Internet-connected computers, although just about anyone who works in an office can testify that when e-mail is introduced, the printers start working overtime.

‘‘I don’t have any hard data, but I know in my bones that this revolution that was designed to be paperless is causing more trees to be cut down," says Ted Smith of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition. Aside from the loss of trees, paper production itself is highly toxic, consuming large amounts of chlorine and putting more dioxin into the environment.

Perhaps the best indication of how computer and Internet use fuels demand for paper comes from the high-tech industry itself, which has identified printing as one of its most promising new market opportunities.

Several Internet companies including ImageX.com Inc., iPrint.com Inc. and printCafe have been created to help consumers and small businesses print professional quality documents from a PC. And printing giant Hewlett-Packard Co. says that far from seeing a slowdown resulting from the rise of electronic ink, demand for printing the old-fashioned way -- on

paper -- is exploding.

Earlier this week the company unveiled a sweeping initiative to develop new technologies that will enable consumers to print even more -- from cellphones, pagers and other devices -- so they can get a hard copy of a business document, a medical record or just a memorable one-line e-mail, even if they are nowhere near a PC.

It may seem ironic, but this new printing strategy is central to Hewlett-Packard’s Internet strategy. As the company sees it, the increased use of the Internet will correlate directly with increased demand for printers. It says it expects the $40 billion worldwide market for printing and imaging will be a $100 billion market in just three years.

‘‘People love paper," says Carolyn Ticknor, who heads Hewlett-Packard’s printing and imaging services unit.

‘‘I know people who like to read the newspaper online. Well, I like to read the paper in the bathtub, and I’m not going to take a laptop in there .... I like to buy stocks online. But when I execute a trade, you better believe I make a paper printout of the transaction."

To demonstrate how the Internet creates new ways to use printers as often as it offers ways to do without them, one of Hewlett-Packard’s partners in its new printing strategy is NewspaperDirect.com, which lets consumers order up international newspapers, so they can read the news from California when they are traveling abroad.

Of course consumers can already go to the Internet to read the news from remote locales, but a lot of them prefer holding the paper, explained a spokesman who came to the Hewlett-Packard event to show off his paper goods.

Are these printed on recycled paper? ‘‘No, no," the spokesman responded as he handed out samples of the weighty papers. ‘‘It’s white bond paper."

Does this mean environmental concerns have been forgotten? Some activists suggest people have been lulled into believing a lot of threats to the environment have gone away.

‘‘I suspect that there is just an assumption that the problem is taken care of, because of recycling," said Kelly Quirke, executive director of the Rainforest Action Network in San Francisco.

Yet Quirke is hopeful that the high-tech trends may also prove helpful. He says new, more sophisticated e-mail programs that let users filter and file by topic, make it easier to retrieve mail that is stored electronically. And printers that print on both sides, he says, are growing in popularity.

The group has also endorsed papers made from alternative fibers, including one made from agricultural waste that could help remove pollutants from the environment. It says it is encouraged by the shift by some major corporations to these new papers.

Want a Helluva Catchy Web Address? Go to Hell.com

It’s a hell of a Web site and it carries a helluva price tag.

The Internet domain address Hell.com has hit the auction block with a starting bid price of $8 million, but the owner of the Web name expects the final sale price to climb much higher.

The auction is being hosted by HitDomains.com, one of several domain-name brokerages that help owners of some of the most popular Internet addresses on the market sell their virtual real estate for millions of dollars.

Earlier this year, Business.com sold for $7.5 million, Loans.com sold for $3 million and Autos.com sold for $2.2 million -- hefty price tags for Web names that costs as little as $35 a year to register.

Eric Harrington, chief operating officer of HitDomains.com, said he suspects Hell.com could become one of the premiere portals on the Web, competing with the likes of Yahoo! Inc., especially considering the possibilities for marketing slogans -- ‘‘Go to Hell.com."

‘‘You can build a whole business around this name," Harrington said.

‘‘As Internet businesses evolve, the cost of marketing and building brand recognition has become one of the most expensive," he added.

Hell.com was registered back in 1995 by Kenneth Aronson, a member of The Final.org (http://www.final.org), an enigmatic collective of digital artists and creative visionaries who had been using Hell.com as a private destination for their work.

‘‘The concept of Hell.com was always the antithesis of the Web," Aronson told Reuters.

‘‘We knew that the Internet was destined to become just disgustingly commercial where every place was sickly sweet, overly friendly and self-promotional," he said. ‘‘And Hell.com was the one site you could not get into."

‘‘When they typed Hell.com into their browser, they were looking for the unknown," he said. ‘‘They wanted to know what’s there. They want to go to Hell and they don’t even know why."

Eventually Hell.com generated so much traffic, more than one million hits per month, The Final.org was unable to handle the volume despite the private nature of the site. And since The Final.org sustains itself with private funds, the next logical step was to sell it, no matter how heartbreaking -- or "disgustingly commercial."

‘‘It’s been a great ego trip being the gatekeeper of Hell," Aronson said, adding that it was a hard decision to let the address go.

‘‘The company that buys Hell.com will have made a giant leap forward in branding," Harrington added. ‘‘Here’s an opportunity for a company to gain instant brand recognition that lasts...forever. That’s a good business decision."

Pets.com Socks It to ’Late Night’

Online pet supply store Pets.com says the friendly reputation of its

kitschy ‘‘spokespuppet" has been defamed by a foul-mouthed dog puppet featured on NBC’s ‘‘Late Night With Conan O’Brien."

In a federal lawsuit filed last week, Pets.com accuses ‘‘Late Night" writer Robert Smigel, creator of the show’s ‘‘Triumph the Insult Comic Dog," of defaming the ubiquitous sock puppet.

‘‘Triumph is a rubber-dog that ... regularly uses vulgarity, insults both the humans and other dogs around him and often conducts physical attacks of a sexual nature on female dogs," the complaint says.

The lawsuit goes on to say that in ‘‘an attempt to harm the Sock Puppet’s audience appeal and ... to increase Triumph’s popularity through a public ‘controversy’ or ‘scandal,"’ Smigel has claimed to media outlets that ‘‘the Sock Puppet is a ‘rip-off’ of Triumph."

The lawsuit names only Smigel and not the show or NBC. It seeks unspecified damages and legal costs.

Marc Liepis, a spokesman for ‘‘Late Night," said neither the show nor Smigel would comment on the lawsuit. But, he noted that the cigar-smoking Triumph made his debut long before the arrival of the sock puppet.

Liepis said the cigar-smoking Triumph first appeared on Late Night on Feb. 13, 1997. The Pets.com puppet made its debut in August 1999.

‘‘I’m guessing Pets.com is suing to basically stop Robert (Smigel) from complaining that they ripped it off from us," Liepis said.

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